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Position

CLASSIFICATION



in a **NUTSHELL**

August 1963

Prepared by the Office of Personnel
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



FOREWORD

This "new" Classification in a Nutshell is being issued 40 years after the passage of the original Classification Act. The first edition of this pamphlet was issued 13 years ago by the Department of Agriculture. It proved to be extremely popular and was reprinted by the Government Printing Office for Government-wide distribution.

Some exciting changes in our classification and pay system have occurred the past few years—particularly as a result of the Federal Salary Reform Act of 1962. So the purpose of this edition is primarily to show those changes.

Some of the personnel research studies show that pay is not the most important incentive for high morale. But we all know that pay is an economic necessity and the amount we receive *is* a very important item in our lives.

Perhaps even more important for high morale is the knowledge that our pay is fairly comparable to that of other employees doing similar work.

Most of us know that a system of position classification is used to determine our pay. But we may not know as much as we should about the principles and operations of that system.

This pamphlet, "Classification in a Nutshell," has been designed to meet this need—to explain briefly how positions are classified and the relation between positions, performance, and pay. It also describes the part the supervisor plays in the classification process.

If you are a supervisor, good position and pay management for the employees reporting to you is one of your most important responsibilities. Your effectiveness is largely the result of *their* performance. You will be continually seeking ways to improve that performance. Understanding the classification system—applying it as intended—is a most effective way of doing this.

CARL B. BARNES
Director of Personnel



SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

The *Congress* will secure:

- A sound and practical working basis for arriving at the proper rates of compensation in appropriations for personal services.
- The assurance that on this basis salaries and wages will be appropriated at the same rate for the same work in all departments and at all times . . .
- Assistance in the consideration of estimates through the common use by all departments of a specific and uniform terminology for classes of positions, i.e., kinds of personal service . . .

The *departments* will secure:

- The immediate relief, so vital to the holding together of the experienced departmental organizations, that will come from the adoption of revised salary scales for specialized workers (particularly scientific and technical employees).
- Permanent relief from the confusion resulting from the variations in salary scales for the same work in different departments, with the consequent tendency toward interdepartmental competition.
- A means of expressing their exact organization needs to the appropriating body—the Congress—and the recruiting body—the Civil Service Commission . . .

The *employees* will secure:

- Immediate relief in cases where they are now inadequately paid.
- Uniform justice in the relation between the compensation they receive and the value of their work.
- The assurance that all other employees of the Government engaged in the same work are being treated in the same way . . .
- The incentive to effort that comes of a knowledge of an assured reward for successful accomplishment—advance in pay for increased usefulness in the same class of work and higher compensation upon promotion to a higher grade of work.

The *public* will secure:

- The assurance that its Government aims to be a model employer, and to pay each employee in proportion to the value of the work required of him.

—From the *Report of the Congressional Joint Commission on Reclassification of Salaries*,
March 12, 1920.



POSITION CLASSIFICATION

★ WHAT IT IS ★ HOW IT WORKS ★ HOW PAY FITS IN

★ HOW PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS FIT IN

★ HOW IT HELPS MANAGEMENT ★ HOW THE SUPERVISOR FITS IN





WHAT IS POSITION CLASSIFICATION ?

What does classification mean to you personally? Do you lose or gain by it? Who gets within-grade pay increases and when? What is the relationship of performance appraisals? How does the supervisor fit into the classification picture?

These are just a few of the questions fre-

quently asked by employees about classification. Answers will be found on the following pages.

The basic principle of classification is very simple. If you'll look about, you'll find it used widely in everyday life.



The different items of food that you find in a grocery store are arranged separately so that all the bread, all the meats, the canned foods, the soap, the juices, and other kinds of commodities can be found in a place reserved for like items. This puts *system* and *order* into managing the store and serving its customers. The *organized arrangement* makes it easy to put the proper value or price on all the items in one group and helps customers find what they want. This, of course, is absolutely necessary for good store management.

The same need for efficient handling, evaluating, or managing items explains the arrangement and classification of books in libraries, of chemical and physical elements and of plants, animals, etc., in the sciences, and of young men of different ages, training, and abilities under the Selective Service system. In all of these situations classification, by grouping like items together, makes the job of managing those items easier.

Exactly the same principle applies in *position* classification.



POSITION CLASSIFICATION

Positions must be treated in an orderly way in the Federal service. There are many positions and they are of many different types and kinds. Thus a systematic arrangement of positions is needed, just as for items in a grocery store or for books in a library.

The method of grouping is indicated here. To determine whether similar positions belong in the same class, three points are considered: kind of work, level of difficulty and responsibility, and qualifications required. These are important because they are the features of your job that determine the proper group or class in which it belongs.

After your job has been thoroughly studied in terms of the three points mentioned, it is classified by giving it a title and a grade. The grade really determines a certain scale of pay for your work.

Remember—grouping jobs by kind and level of work and qualifications required by the work determines the title and pay scales for each job.



GROUPING POSITIONS BY KIND OF WORK

Examine more closely this arrangement by *kind* or *type* of work performed. A stenographer's work differs from a statistical clerk's; chemists' work differs considerably from that of economists. Since the work is not similar, the positions involved do not naturally fall in the same group. Knowing the kind of work an em-

ployee does is essential to finding a title for his position. But this is only the first step in classifying a job. Jobs differ not only as to kind of work, but in responsibility as well. We need to make a further grouping to get at the proper level of one stenographer's duties, for example, in relation to the level of work done by another stenographer.



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY AND RESPONSIBILITY

In general, work ranges from routine to responsible. Using the obvious extremes here of the rodman and the engineering agency chief, you can see at a glance the meaning of differences in level after establishing the kind of work. This gives uniform treatment in arranging positions according to similar levels of responsibility.



QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

The third feature considered in grouping positions is that of qualifications *required by the job* itself, not those you may happen to have. They tell something about the *type* of work and the *level* of work. They are essential to the other steps in the process because positions which are similar in *kind* and *level* of work require similar skills and abilities to do the work.



A UNIFORM TITLE AND SAME SCALE OF PAY FOR SUBSTANTIALLY EQUAL WORK

When the grouping is finished all positions that are the same with respect to kind of work, level of work, and qualifications required are in the same group and all positions in a group are in the same grade and given the same title and range of pay. *Where the positions are located* does not make any difference. There is equal pay for substantially equal work. This is the key to the whole system.

Remember, then, that classification is grouping positions according to—

1. *Kind of work*
2. *Level of difficulty and responsibility*
3. *Qualifications required*

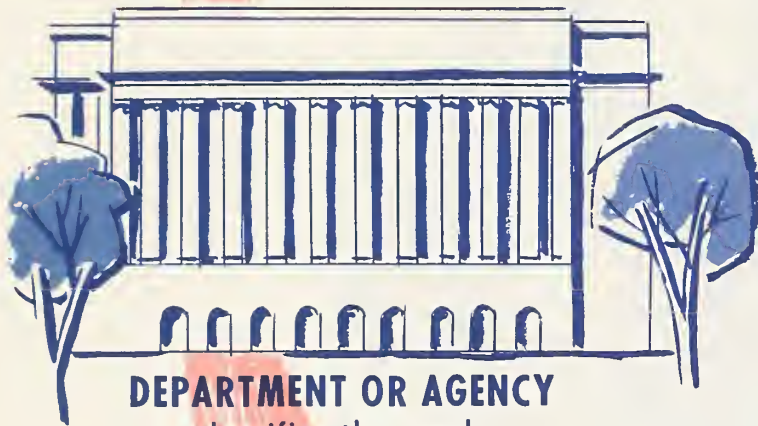
These three determine pay—pay does not determine them.



Let's look briefly at the background for position classification—what its framework is—who uses it—who is responsible for it—how it all fits together within the framework.



CLASSIFICATION ACT OF 1949, AS AMENDED



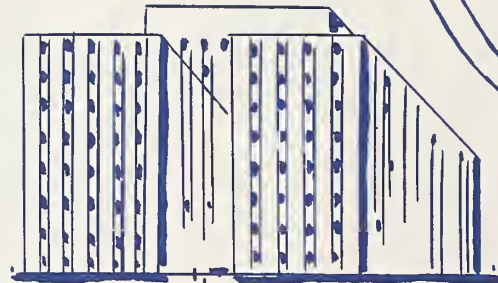
DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY

- classifies the work



SUPERVISOR

- assigns and
supervises the work



CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

- writes rules
prepares standards
inspects and corrects



EMPLOYEE

- performs
the work





Congress established the present classification plan by passing the Classification Act of 1949. This act tells how the plan is to operate and who is responsible for making it work. It describes broad standards for use in measuring jobs and tells how the standards are to be used. Subsequent amendments have not greatly changed the basic plan.

The head of each department or agency is responsible for coordinating the classification policies and activities within the department or agency.

Personnel offices in the departments and agencies are responsible for making studies of work assignments and applying the proper standard to arrive at the correct classification. Thus the departments and agencies classify the work.

The supervisor decides and assigns tasks or duties to employees. All the assignments to one employee constitute a job or position. And the employee is responsible for carrying out the duties of the job efficiently.

The Civil Service Commission coordinates classification for the entire Government. This is done mostly by periodically inspecting work assignments to check them against classification grades of positions in the agency. The Commission also is responsible for writing rules and regulations to be followed by the agencies and for preparing standards to be used by people who classify individual jobs.

**HOW DOES THE
SYSTEM WORK ?**





Three main steps are involved in operating the system. The first is *setting* standards. Classification standards are written statements developed to help determine job difficulty and establish basic pay relationships in a consistent manner. They should not be confused with either qualification standards or performance standards. Each classification standard distinguishes the duties and responsibilities of one class of positions from those of other classes, shows the grade to which the class belongs, and establishes the official class title. Because the standard is so important to the classification process, it is developed through joint

consultation by the Civil Service Commission and the various departments and agencies, with substantial aid and advice from operating officials. Compliance with the contents of published standards is absolutely required under the law.

After the standard comes the second part of the operation—*fixing and describing work assignments*. To



understand the importance of this part, remember that positions in the Executive Branch are established as the result of Congress giving it a job to do. Management determines how to do the job by organization planning, involving people, money, and positions. Supervisors, through work assignments, determine the duties and responsibilities of all the individuals who make up an organization. So the work assignment is the really important thing to evaluate. To do this, a job description, written to give all the pertinent facts—in your own words, as simply and briefly as possible, without any “fluff”—helps a whole lot.

Weighing or measuring the assignment against the proper standard is the third important step. The work assignment, i.e., the employee's job, is evaluated by comparing it with a standard. Standards for different kinds of jobs may be written somewhat differ-



ently, but each standard tries to make clear the things that distinguish one grade from another in the occupation involved. Standards are applied to determine the level, or grade, of jobs that seems most nearly to fit the job being measured.

By systematically applying these three steps, your agency relates pay rates to job difficulty so that it can actually put into practice the policy of paying you and your fellow employees equitably for results achieved and in proportion to your contribution to the joint effort.

Up to this point we have looked at what position classification is and how it works. Now let's turn to pay.



**HOW DOES
PAY FIT IN ?**



THE PAY SCALES OF THE CLASSIFICATION ACT OF 1949, AS AMENDED

THE GENERAL SCHEDULE

BASIC PER ANNUM RATES ¹

GS	52 Weeks			104 Weeks			156 Weeks			10	Amount Ea. Step
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
1	\$3245	\$3350	\$3455	\$3560	\$3665	\$3770	\$3875	\$3980	\$4085	\$4190	\$105
2	3560	3665	3770	3875	3980	4085	4190	4295	4400	4505	105
3	3820	3925	4030	4135	4240	4345	4455	4580	4705	4830	105-125
4	4110	4250	4390	4530	4670	4810	4950	5090	5230	5370	140
5	4565	4725	4885	5045	5205	5365	5525	5685	5845	6005	160
6	5035	5205	5375	5545	5715	5885	6055	6225	6395	6565	170
7	5540	5725	5910	6095	6280	6465	6650	6835	7020	7205	185
8	6090	6295	6500	6705	6910	7115	7320	7525	7730	7935	205
9	6675	6900	7125	7350	7575	7800	8025	8250	8475	8700	225
10	7290	7535	7780	8025	8270	8515	8760	9005	9250	9495	245
11	8045	8310	8575	8840	9105	9370	9635	9900	10165		265
12	9475	9790	10105	10420	10735	11050	11365	11680	11995		315
13	11150	11515	11880	12245	12610	12975	13340	13705	14070		365
14	12845	13270	13695	14120	14545	14970	15395	15820	16245		425
15	14565	15045	15525	16005	16485	16965	17445	17925			480
16	16000	16500	17000	17500	18000						500
17	18000	18500	19000	19500	20000						500
18	20000										

¹Effective October 14, 1962. Rates are subject to change under subsequent legislative action amending existing pay scales.



This is the general pay schedule, commonly referred to as "GS", which the Congress has set up in the Classification Act. It has a series of grades, and each grade except the top grade has a series of salary steps. Once the grade level has been determined for a position by measuring its duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements against the classification standards, the pay of that grade level follows automatically from the schedule. Let us see how the pay rates of the schedule are used.



Within-Grade Step Increases

The respective rate ranges of the General Schedule are designed to provide "within-grade increases." The main purpose of these increases is to pay you for continuing to perform at an *acceptable level of competence*

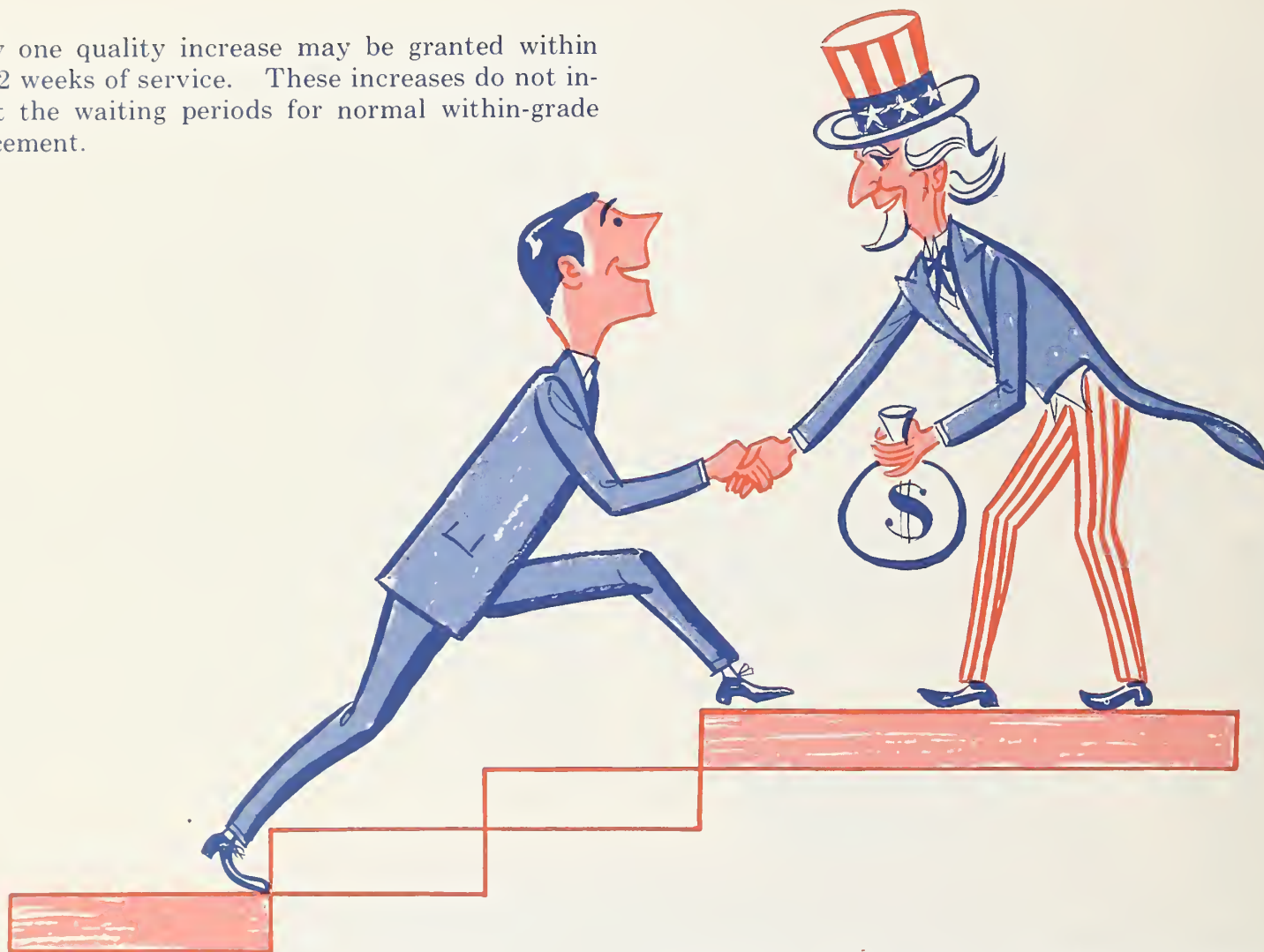
in your job—not for what the job is. That's been taken care of by placing the job in a particular classification grade.

The amount paid as a within-grade increase varies, depending on the grade. The frequency of increases declines as you advance within your grade. For example, in each of the first 3 steps of any grade, the waiting period for promotion to the step above is only 52 weeks, but in each of the next 3 steps, the waiting period increases to 104 weeks, and in steps 7, 8, and 9, it increases again to 156 weeks.

Quality Increases

In addition to receiving regular within-grade step-ups for maintaining an acceptable level of competence, you may be considered for "quality increases." Your supervisor can recommend one of these increases for you when your contribution substantially exceeds the standard for good performance. He must also consider whether you sustain your high level effort to the extent that it may be considered characteristic of the way you perform all the most important functions of your job.

Only one quality increase may be granted within each 52 weeks of service. These increases do not interrupt the waiting periods for normal within-grade advancement.



An Immediate Salary Increase . . . When You're Promoted

You are assured of a higher salary when your grade is raised by still another feature of the pay plan. When you're reassigned from one job to another at a

promotion in grade, you're entitled to the nearest rate in the higher grade which is at least equal to two within-grade increases in the grade from which you are promoted.

Thus, if you were promoted from GS-3 where your salary was \$4,030 to GS-4, your new pay rate would be \$4,250.



Does Job Performance Affect Pay?

Knowing what you now do about the way the pay plan works, you can probably answer the question shown here—yet it is not always easy for people to see the true relationship between performance and grade and pay.

When you're meeting or exceeding an acceptable



level of competence, you feel you should be paid more than a co-worker who is barely getting by—and you're right. The pay plan is especially designed, with step rates and quality increases, to reward employees whose performance exceeds the minimum expected.

But . . .



Does It Affect Classification of Your Job?

People sometimes think that a high level of performance should be the basis for changing the grade of a job even though the work remains the same. Actually, the grade of your job depends on what you do—the kind of work and your responsibilities in connection with it—and the qualifications you must have to do the job, rather than on how well you accomplish your duties.

Remember, though, that performance on your job is important to your holding the job and receiving within-grade increases, and is considered when promotions are made to higher grade work.

Your supervisor is expected to follow your performance carefully. The evaluation of the performance of each of his employees is his day-to-day responsibility.

In the case of those employees whose work is unsatisfactory or is barely satisfactory—not up to the standard met by other employees doing the same kind of work—he is expected to withhold certification for within-grade increases.

In other words, movement upward within the salary range must be based only on performance that is at least *fully satisfactory*. Your job performance, not length of service alone, is the determining factor.

Try to keep the important distinction shown on this and the preceding page in mind and it will help you to understand the difference between the operation of the pay plan, based on performance appraisals, on the one hand—and the operation of the job evaluation plan on the other.



CLASSIFICATION WON'T CURE ALL YOUR PROBLEMS

Here is another fairly common misconception about classification. While proper use of the classification system is a valuable tool of management, it is not intended to be used as a cure-all.

Problems of bad organization, poor supervision, inefficient performance, inadequate training, misassignment of personnel and similar things cannot be cured by distorting the real objective of classification. Each problem must be solved by using the *right* management method.

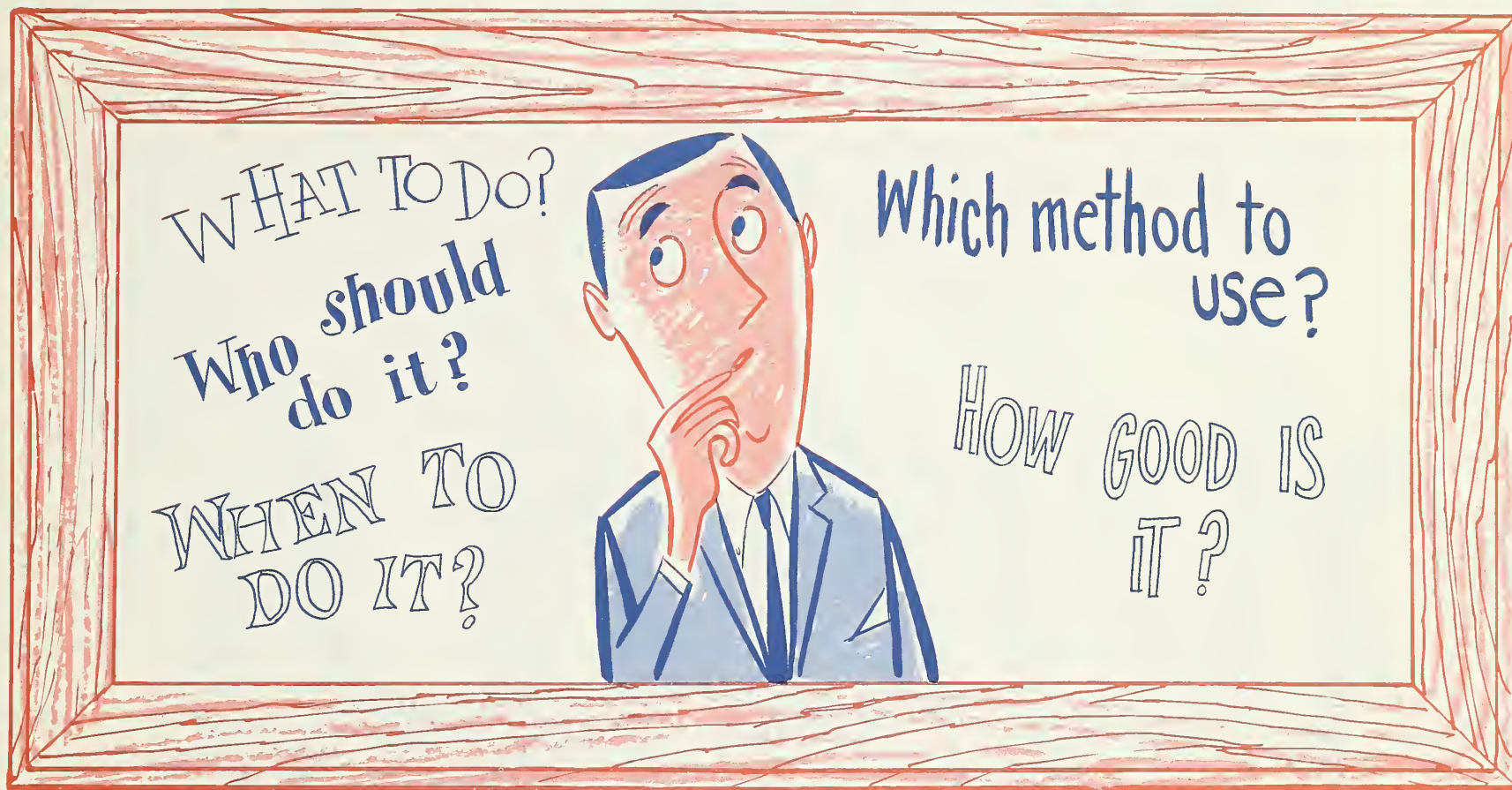
If work is badly organized in the first place, no amount of effort through classification alone will make it well organized. If employees need better procedures

or closer supervision on tough assignments, classification won't help much by itself. Misassignments are the result of poor work planning, not classification.

But classification, if understood and applied properly, can help a supervisor and his people in many ways.

MR. SUPERVISOR :
YOU HOLD THE KEY





YOU DECIDE, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF AGENCY POLICY, WHAT THE ANSWERS ARE TO ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS

After decisions have been made in the work plan, you are ready to organize the work and your staff to get the job done quickly and efficiently. Your action from start to finish can be summed up as determining what's to be done, assigning people to do it, scheduling

the work to complete it on time, supervising the work while it's being done, and evaluating the results when it's finished. Note this—Every one of these things has an important influence on both the pay and job evaluation features of classification.

ORGANIZING FOR TEAMWORK

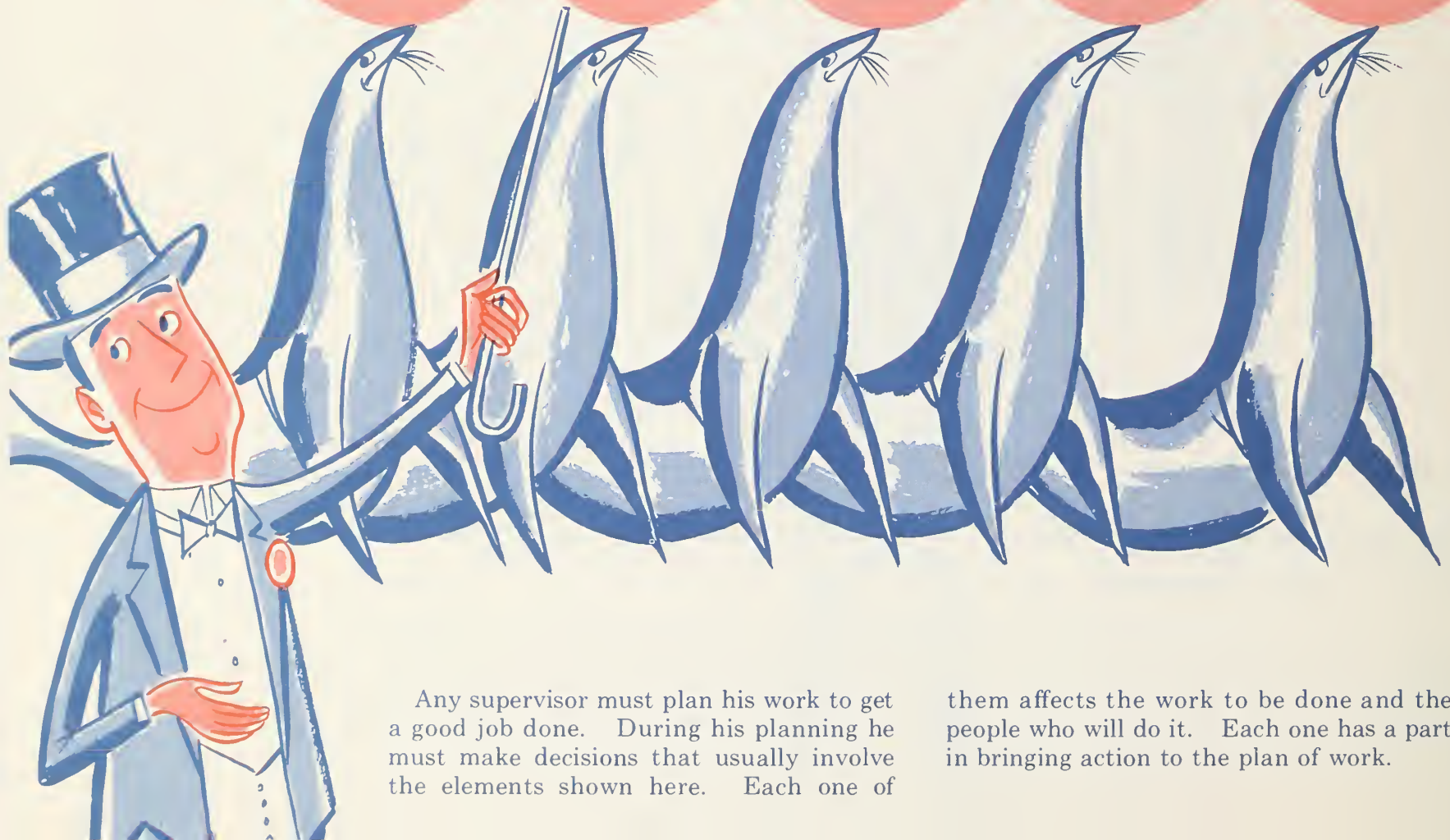
Determining-

Assigning-

Scheduling-

Supervising-

Evaluating-



Any supervisor must plan his work to get a good job done. During his planning he must make decisions that usually involve the elements shown here. Each one of

them affects the work to be done and the people who will do it. Each one has a part in bringing action to the plan of work.



COMMUNICATE FACTS AS TO

- Duties
- Responsibilities
- Job Qualifications
Requirements



MAKE CLASSIFICATION APPLY FAIRLY TO YOUR EMPLOYEES

When work is carefully planned and carried out through well-organized action, classification is bound to apply fairly and equitably among employees. As a supervisor you can give classification a real opportunity to contribute to the effectiveness of your employees and what they do, simply by careful everyday work planning and supervision.

REMEMBER:

Classification is only as effective as the facts on which it rests. You and your employees know these facts about your jobs better than anyone else!

Unless you furnish accurate information about the work assignments of your people to your classification or administrative officer, classification will not work properly for you or your organization.



GOOD CLASSIFICATION helps accomplish GOOD MANAGEMENT

1. Employees paid *the same scale of pay for work of equal difficulty and importance* under a system that establishes a *direct relationship between responsibilities and salaries* are satisfied employees, willing to carry their share of the total job. That is the meaning of equal pay for equal work and is the primary objective of the classification system.

2. Good organization means good planning, and *the systematic arrangement of work* among the jobs and people on your staff. Let's call it orderly arrangement of work assignments.

3. The selection of the right person for the right job depends on *knowing what the job is and what it requires in skills and abilities*. A good description outlining these points is basic to proper employee selection.

4. Efforts to obtain *better utilization of employee capabilities* can be facilitated by making full use of the primary classification services—analyzing duties and responsibilities, determining the individual skills and abilities required to perform them, and engineering or designing jobs so as to conserve those skills that are high and rare and to promote full use of the more plentiful technical and other support services.

5. Performance appraisals rest entirely on *what work is done and how well it is done*.

6. Training needs are identified by *thorough job analysis* or by *work assignments* that are clearly defined.

7. Common understanding among employees and between them and their supervisors regarding what is to be done is a natural result of *accurately defining work assignments*.

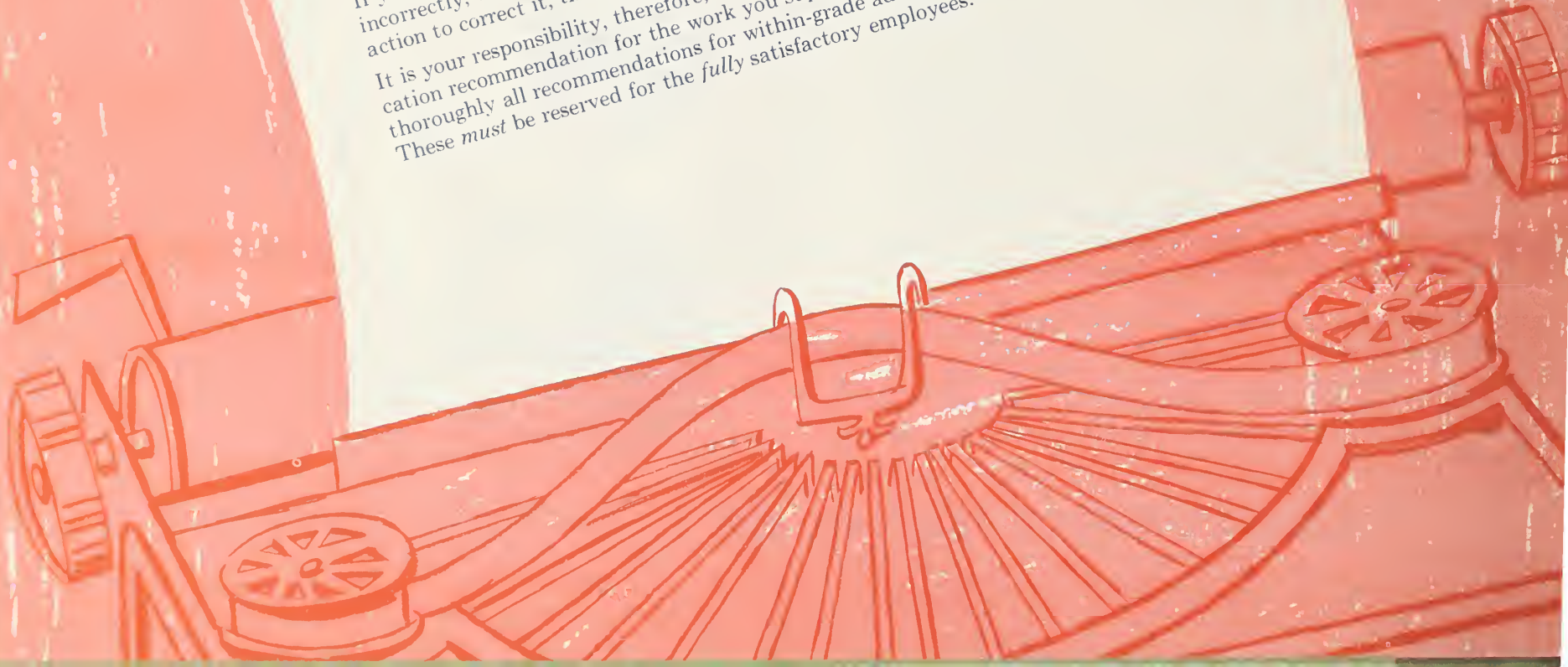
8. Finally, bear in mind that few influences disturb the morale of employees more than pay differences that do not reflect *real differences in responsibilities and performance*.



To sum up for you, we would put it this way, Mr. Supervisor:
Paychecks are important to people. Your employees desire fair and equitable salaries for work performed, recognition for a job well done, courteous treatment, absence of favoritism, opportunities for advancement, and a basis for pride in their agency and its accomplishments. If you can instill confidence in the people who report to you and promote the growth of these factors, the Department will have an enthusiastic, loyal work force, with high morale.

At the same time, the Department expects efficient production for its payroll dollars. If you spend budgeted monies unwisely, the result will be loss. If you assign personnel incorrectly, the result will be loss. If you fail to recognize inefficiency, or take no action to correct it, the result will be loss.

It is your responsibility, therefore, to consider carefully and thoroughly every classification recommendation for the work you supervise, and to consider carefully and thoroughly all recommendations for within-grade advancements and promotions. These *must* be reserved for the *fully* satisfactory employees.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MAKE THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM WORK ?



The system will work right with your help. Use it the way it was intended. Consider its effects in planning and organizing your work. Consider its effects upon your employees. Get the most out of it. See

that classification makes a contribution to better workforce utilization and other personnel and management processes in the public service.

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